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CI 509:001 Initial Field Experience

Accompany a Student Project

September 17, 2010

***Big Brad***

After consulting with my Cooperating Teacher, Mr. Tucker, we decided to ask our US Military History class for a volunteer to participate in my “Accompany a Student” project. The willingness on the part of students was surprising. There were at least five males and a few females who wanted to be selected. In the interest of fairness, we decided that it would be better to have students who wanted to participate guess a number, and whoever guessed closest would be the student I would accompany. This method revealed another surprising situation. The student who ended up being selected and another student nullified a third student’s guess by choosing the contiguous numbers, thereby increasing their chances of being selected. I found this to be somewhat amusing and crafty on their part. To maintain the student’s anonymity, I will call him “Brad.” I discussed the project with Brad, notified his teachers, and we met in his first period class on a Friday.

When I arrived early, the student was already in class and had his Geometry notebook and textbook out and ready to work. When the bell rang to begin class, the students started their warm-up problems working individually. Although I had observed Brad in my US Military History class, I was unsure what the day would reveal about his experience as a freshman at Franklin High School. Once they were done with the warm-up, they began to work on a worksheet about reflection symmetry. Brad worked in a group with four other students and was very active. He was given the opportunity to ask the first question when it was time to go over the answers and he volunteered to attempt to answer problems in front of the class. At this point, I was unsure if his enthusiasm was genuine or a product of my presence.

Brad explained to me that he struggled with math, which is why he was no longer in the US Military History class. His schedule had been changed to accommodate a study period designated for math tutoring. However, his willingness to ask questions and participate in class discussion became a theme throughout the day. It was clear to me that Brad was interested in becoming better at math and that he took learning seriously.

After Geometry class, Brad decided that calling me his “probation officer” would be a fun prank to play on his friends. I believe the word got around and some believed him until I was questioned about it by a friend after lunch. On our way to Biology, the halls were crowded, but Brad navigated them effortlessly holding conversations with a variety of people. I was getting the sense that Brad was very out-going and he was accepted into different social circles.

Brad was punctual all day, but he sat in the back of Biology class. Although he was asking questions and participating, he had a bit of trouble focusing and staying on task. Class was interrupted by a fire drill, and Brad and I got separated briefly. When I found him and asked him to join the rest of the class, his Geometry teacher started yelling at him. Her demeanor in the previous class had been less than pleasant, but her reaction to Brad attempting to find his current teacher and classmates was an overreaction, to understate the case.

After making our way back to Biology and settling down, the students began to work on a preliminary scientific method exercise. Not only had there been no positive feedback for Brad from the first class, but when he would raise his hand to ask a question, the Biology teacher would address the student with a stern “WHAT.” This happened to every student in the class, and gave me the sense that Brad’s teachers thus far were either not enjoying what they were teaching, or their attitudes were a function of it being early in the day. The feeling I got was that both of Brad’s teachers thus far were annoyed by their students, and speaking to my CT confirmed my suspicion regarding their attitudes and behavior. Thankfully, the rest of Brad’s teachers were enthusiastic and seemed genuinely concerned about their students and what they were learning.

English and Introduction to Law consisted of more of the same eagerness from Brad. His unswerving inquisitiveness was refreshing. Brad expressed that English was his favorite subject and he chose to read a book that was the more advanced among the choices. Assuming the role of group leader in the literature circle was naturally predictable, but his organizational skills made it difficult to create the calendar for his group. The teacher intervened to help make the schedule and she provided the first instance of positive feedback I had heard.

Intro. to Law was filled with group presentations and discussion about various issues that would arise if one were stranded on an island. They had been reading “Lord of the Flies.” Brad was attentive to each group’s presentation and, again, did not hesitate to offer his opinions when the floor opened for discussion. He had a bit of difficulty articulating his thoughts, but his comments indicated his respect for differing opinions and a general sense of equity and fairness.

Because Franklin has an open campus policy, we walked to Subway for lunch. None of his friends decided to join us, which gave me more of a chance to talk to Brad about his life outside of school and his ambitions for the future. He told me that he liked to debate and that teachers in the past had suggested that he might like to be a lawyer. We talked about philosophy and how it was a good discipline for preparing to become a lawyer. Brad also likes photography and going hiking with his father and grandfather. His parents are divorced, but it appears that his family life is loving and supportive.

After lunch, we went to his Math study help class. His Biology teacher and a substitute were covering for the Math teacher, which seemed odd. It was clear that the substitute had little to no experience teaching Math, and the Biology teacher assisted the other students. I ended up helping Brad grasp some concepts about graphing equations that he had been struggling with. When he had achieved an understanding of the material that had eluded him, he said to me, “Mr. Presley, you are going to be a good teacher.” His words struck me, and I can only hope that he is right.

Although he had forgotten his change of clothes, he still participated in the activities of the day. P.E. was also a class in which I could participate. We played dodge ball, which was my favorite game during P.E. I had not played dodge ball since I was in middle school, and it was just like being back in the gymnasium I remember from years ago. However, I must confess that I was in better shape back then. The games ended and we took some time to cool off before Spanish class where they were taking a test.

As a freshman, Brad seems to be navigating his new surroundings with relative ease. As best I can tell, he will have a positive learning experience during his time at FHS.